

fix standards for service, and general supervisory and regulatory powers over the utilities subject to its jurisdiction. In the exercise of this supervision and jurisdiction, it is the purpose of the Commission to insure and maintain to the public safe and adequate service, at just and reasonable rates, without unjust discrimination.

The Commission is given power to investigate and ascertain the fair value of the property of corporations subject to its jurisdiction.

An annual report showing the financial conditions and operations of each utility under its jurisdiction is required to be filed with the Commission. Tables showing the results of the operations of the utilities are compiled and included in the Commission's annual report, which report also contains all opinions and final orders entered by the Commission during the year covered thereby.

By legislation enacted subsequent to the original Act, the Commission has been given power to fix minimum as well as maximum rates, to suspend schedules of rates pending the determination of the reasonableness of the rates proposed, and utilities are forbidden to abandon or discontinue the exercise of franchises without the permission and approval of the Commission.

The Commission has also been authorized to make joint investigations, hold joint hearings, and issue joint or concurrent orders in conjunction or concurrence with any official board or commission of any State or of the United States, under agreements or compacts between States or under the concurrent power of States to regulate interstate commerce, or as an agency of the Federal Government, or otherwise.

The Commission is required by law to test all electric meters and gas meters before installation, and to test meters upon request of the consumer.

The Commission maintains a laboratory in which daily tests are made of the gas furnished in the City of Baltimore, and its inspectors also make regular and frequent tests of the gas and electricity furnished in other parts of the State.

The proceedings before the Commission frequently require hearings, and all such hearings are public and are reported by a stenographer, and a permanent record thereof is kept.

In the case of *ex parte* applications of utilities for permission to exercise franchises, to issue securities or otherwise invoking the jurisdiction of the Commission, the applicant is required to advertise, at its own expense, giving notice of the hearing to be had, so that the public interested may be advised thereof and given the opportunity to be heard with respect thereto.

One of the most important amendments to the original Act is that providing for representation by counsel of the interests of the public in all proceedings before the Commission. The Act now provides for the appointment by the Governor of an experienced and qualified lawyer as People's Counsel, and it is the duty of this official to represent the interests of complainants and of the public generally in proceedings before the Commission.

Chapter 201 of the Acts of 1927 provides for the re-establishment of the office of General Counsel to the Commission, the appointment to be made by the Governor for a term of six years.